

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE FEDERAL & STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Doug Mays at 1:35 p.m. on February 20, 2001 in Room 313-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Representative John Edmonds, Excused  
Representative L. Candy Ruff, Excused

Committee staff present: Theresa M. Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes  
Russell Mills, Legislative Research Department  
Shelia Pearman, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:  
Representative Daniel Thimesch  
Ken Strafer, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Veterans Affairs  
Dr. Lea Steele, Epidemiologist, Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs  
Jim Bunker, Gulf War Veteran

Others attending: See attached list

Without objection resolution will be introduced as requested by Representative Wilson authorizing voters to enact and amend state laws. [HCR 5024]

Without objection resolution will be introduced as requested by Representative Wilson regarding authorizing voters to initiate constitutional amendments. [HCR 5025]

Without objection bill will be introduced as requested by Representative Benlon regarding surveyors not considered trespassing on land if purpose is for surveying. [HB 2539]

Chairman Mays opened the hearing on **HR 6008 - Memorializing Congress to provide assistance to veterans suffering with "Gulf War illness"**.

Representative Thimesch (Attachment #1) noted the 1997 Kansas Legislature funded a study by Dr. Steele which was published in the American Journal of Epidemiology. This study cost \$150,000 compared to \$150 million the federal government has spent on researching the "Gulf War syndrome" yielding less evidence of the syndrome. The study found the individuals with the highest rate of illness were the enlisted Army personnel stationed who left the Iraq/Kuwait regions between June-July 1991. He expressed his appreciation for Mr. Bunker to champion this legislation due to his personal experiences following the war. (Attachment #2)

Dr. Steele provided details of the study (Attachment #3) based on the 7,500 veterans now living in Kansas who served in Gulf War. A privately funded study is ongoing in Texas and California regarding microplasma.

Mr. Strafer expressed his willingness to communicate the strides Kansas has made toward addressing the Gulf War veterans to The Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs appointed by President George W. Bush. He noted Governor Graves leadership and willingness to host a Kansas Legislative Commission including the neighboring states of Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska and Oklahoma.

Members of committee expressed personal or family experiences of serving in various wars and the need to provide this support for the veterans who did their job of serving their country very well.  
The hearing on HR 6008 was closed.

Representative Rehorn moved adoption of HR 6008. Representative Wilson second the motion. The motion passed.

The committee meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m. The next scheduled meeting is February 28, 2001.

# HOUSE FEDERAL & STATE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE GUEST LIST

DATE: 2/20/01

NAME	REPRESENTING
Robert Trautle	KCC
Phil Bradley	KLBA
Carla Maloy	PKM
Barbara Halstead	NEIU, Lake Section
Karni Ann Kowal	KATP

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 (785) 296-7680  
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HOUSE OF  
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 SOUTH/CENTRAL/SEDGWICK COUNTY DELEGATION  
 GULF WAR ADVISORY BOARD

## TESTIMONY - FEDERAL AND STATE COMMITTEE

February 7, 2001

In 1997 the Kansas Legislature decided to determine how big a problem we have in the state with Gulf War illness. A Bill was drafted that would provide for a scientific study. It directed the Kansas Commission on Veteran Affairs, with the help of an advisory board to do a study. This study needed to be credible, above criticism and reproach. The KCVA hired an expert, an epidemiologist that had worked for the CDC, Dr. Lea Steele. Dr. Steele put together a credible study that did accomplish the task. These summaries are in the resolution. The results were printed in the American journal of Epidemiology. This study cost the State of Kansas \$150,000. The Federal Government has spent well over 150 million and has not been able to come up with what Kansas has.

I encourage this committee to pass out favorably HR 6008

Respectfully,

Dan Thimesch

House Fed. &  
 State Affairs  
 Date 2/20/2001  
 Attachment No. 1  
 Page 1 of 1

By James A. Bunker, Gulf War Veteran

I stand before you today and asked that you support this resolution on Gulf War Illness. As you know the state of Kansas did some great research, that showed how a small agencies could get more accomplished with less money on this matter than the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs has been able to accomplish. If the federal government would fund more studies like ours, we may be able to get to the answers, as to what is going on with these veterans's health. All too often we see from the Department of Defense more of covering up what is wrong than taking care of the veterans.

The Department of Defense has a bad track record of accomplishment in dealing with sick veterans. We can look at the cases of the atomic war experiment veterans and the veterans of Vietnam to see the pattern that is there. For years, it has said radiation did not harm veterans, and they told us that Agent Orange was not harmful. As we can see veterans are now being treated for problems of radiation and a large number of veterans that have a lot of different health effects from the chemicals they were exposed to. Just last year the VA link diabetes to Agents Orange. If groups like the KCVA had the money spent during the '70s to do research into Agent Orange, one can only imagine what we would know now about that chemical.

Our state has proven through the research we have done that small groups can get better answers. We have received more for our money than the federal government it was it's funding. There are still many unanswered questions about Gulf War illness. Lead to spend the money wisely from the federal government and help the veterans that need to help, they want answers they want their lives that, they want to be healthy, they want to have good jobs and they would like to have a normal life without the pain and problems that we have today.

I will also like to see every member this committee to call our federal representatives and asked them to call sponsor age HR 612. Alternatively, battery yet change this into a House bill that will fix title 38 in the close the loopholes. 10 years after the gulf war, with over 100,000 claims filed, less than 200 has been in favor of the veteran for Gulf War Illness. In addition, small number of them awarded compensation to the entrance large part of that is due to the loopholes. Let us close these loopholes, let us helped the veterans.

House Fed. &  
State Affairs  
Date 2/26/2001  
Attachment No. 2  
Page 1 of 1

Testimony Presented to the Federal and State Committee of the Kansas House of Representatives  
by Lea Steele, Ph.D.  
Director, Kansas Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Initiative Program  
Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs

February 20, 2001

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Lea Steele. I am an epidemiologist employed by the State of Kansas to direct the Kansas Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Initiative for the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs. The resolution you are considering today refers, in some detail, to the activities of our program. So I would like to take a few minutes to provide a context for that information by giving you a brief overview of the results and the importance of our study on Gulf War Illness in Kansas veterans. I have included copies of graphics that summarize our findings and conclusions on the pages that follow.



## Gulf War Illness in Kansas Veterans

Lea Steele, Ph.D.

The Kansas Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Initiative Program  
The Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs

## The Persian Gulf War: 1990-1991

- 6 weeks of air strikes, 4 days of ground fighting
- Overwhelming victory, few casualties
- ~ 700,000 Americans deployed, included ~7,500 Kansans
- Veterans have reported unexplained illnesses since the war
- Many possible causes: "Toxic Battlefield?"

House Fed. &  
State Affairs

Date 2/20/2001

Attachment No. 3

Page 2 of 11

## The Persian Gulf War: 1990-1991

### "Toxic Battlefield"?

- > Known low-level exposure to chemical agents
- > Oil well fires
- > Depleted uranium munitions
- > Vaccines
- > Drugs to protect from nerve gas
- > Heavy use of multiple pesticides
- > Novel infectious diseases?
- > Physical and psychological stress

## Gulf War Syndrome: Ten Years Later, Questions Remain

### Federal Response to Gulf War Health Problems

- > \$150 million research effort
- > Few clear answers:
  - > What is the nature of these health problems?
  - > How many veterans are affected?
  - > Are some groups at higher risk?
  - > What caused these problems?
  - > What are effective treatments for these problems?

## The Kansas Gulf Veterans Health Study

- Scientific (epidemiologic) study of over 2,000 Kansas Gulf War-era veterans
- Compared health of Gulf War veterans to health of other ("non-Gulf") veterans from the same period
- Identified key aspects of Gulf War Illness not previously reported

### "Gulf War Illness" Symptoms in 3 or More Groups Symptoms Persist One Year or Longer

**PAIN**  
**SYMPTOMS**

Joint Pain  
Muscle Pain

**NEUROLOGIC**  
**SYMPTOMS**

Memory Problems  
Headaches  
Dizziness  
Mood Changes

**FATIGUE**  
**SYMPTOMS**

Fatigue  
Sleep Problems

**GASTROINTESTINAL**  
**SYMPTOMS**

Diarrhea  
Nausea

**RESPIRATORY**  
**SYMPTOMS**

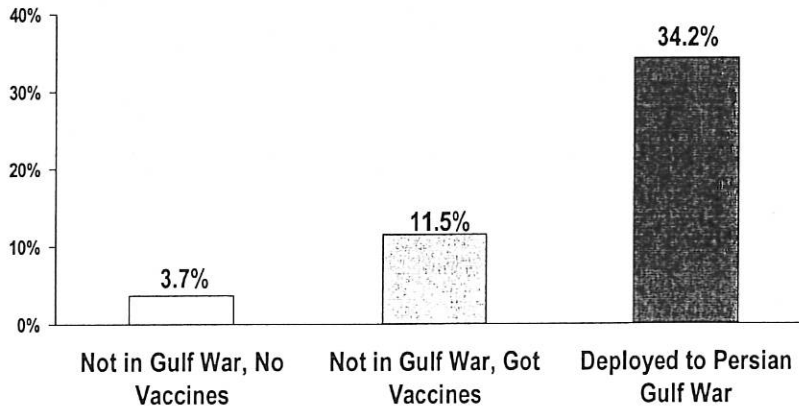
Persistent Cough  
Wheezing

**SKIN**  
**PROBLEMS**

Rashes  
Other Problems

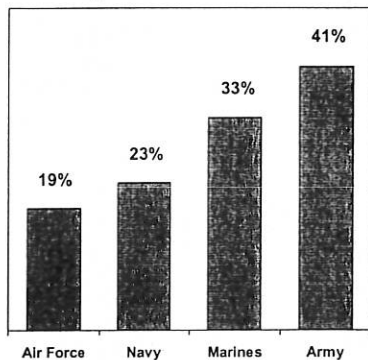


### % of Veterans With Gulf War Illness: By Deployment and Vaccine Status

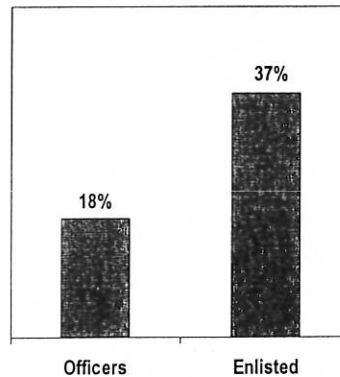


### Gulf War Illness in Gulf War Veterans: Rate Differs by Branch of Service and Military Rank

Rate of Gulf War Illness:  
By Branch of Service\*



Rate of Gulf War Illness:  
By Rank\*



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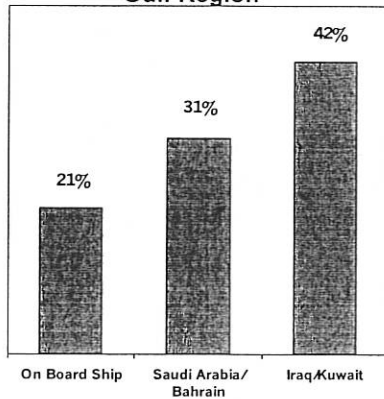
Date 2/20/2001

Attachment No. 3

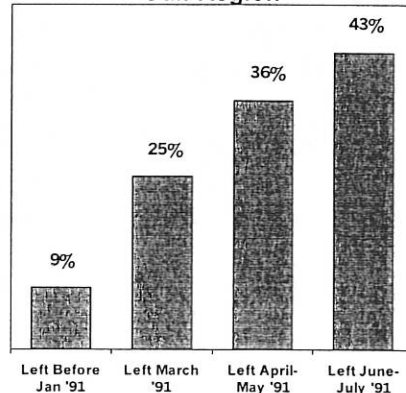
Page 5 of 11

## Gulf War Illness in Gulf War Veterans: Rate Differs by Where and When Veterans Served

**Rate of Gulf War Illness:  
By Location in Persian  
Gulf Region\***



**Rate of Gulf War Illness:  
By Time Period in Persian  
Gulf Region\***



## The Kansas Gulf Veterans Health Study Major Results

- 34% of Kansas Gulf War veterans report "Gulf War Illness" symptom pattern
- Illness rate strongly associated with rank, branch of service, and where and when veterans served in the Persian Gulf region
- Veterans who did not serve in Gulf War, but received vaccines, also have increased rate of illness

House Fed. &  
State Affairs

Date 2/20/2001

Attachment No. 3

Page 6 of 11

## Gulf War Illness: A Federal Issue Where Do We Stand?

- Few answers from federal agencies
  - "Veterans are sick... but don't know why, can't connect it to the war"
- Effective treatments not yet identified
- Preliminary progress from non-federal programs
  - Texas program found evidence of neurologic damage
  - California, Louisiana groups found unusual infections in some veterans
  - Kansas findings

## Gulf War Illness: What Is Needed?

- Veterans deserve answers
- Veterans who are ill need healthcare
- Severely ill veterans need disability compensation

## Gulf War Illness: Ten Years Later

- Gulf War veterans did their job well, on behalf of all Americans.
- Since the war, a substantial number have developed unexplained health problems; some are seriously disabled.
- In a relatively short time and at relatively minimal cost, the State of Kansas has made significant progress in identifying basic parameters of these unexplained problems.
- Veterans with unexplained illnesses are entitled to answers, healthcare, and (when necessary) disability compensation. Federal programs have not effectively addressed the legitimate concerns of Gulf War veterans.

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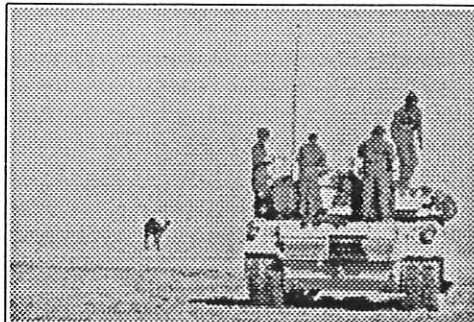
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Tuesday November 21, 2000

## NEWS

### Veterans Affairs

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## Kansas Study Shows 'Significant' Gulf War Ailments

Nov 16, 2000  
Dave Eberhart  
Stars and Stripes Veteran Affairs Editor

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"Over the last five years, the Pentagon has squandered nearly \$150 million and found nothing wrong with Gulf War vets," Patrick G. Eddington, executive director of the National Gulf War Resource Center (NGWRC), said this week.

In contrast, he said, "Non-federal researchers in Kansas have taken only two years and spent only \$150,000 to prove these veterans have significant illnesses. This only validates our contention that if the Pentagon and VA wanted to find the answers to Gulf War illnesses, they could have done so long ago."

Eddington was referring to a study completed Nov. 15 in which some 2,000 Kansas veterans of the 1991 Gulf War were interviewed. The study compared the health of Gulf War veterans with veterans who served elsewhere during the same time period. The study concluded that the

Desert Storm veterans had a far higher rate of illness than non-deployed troops, Eddington said.

***"The study concluded that the Desert Storm veterans had a far higher rate of illness than non-deployed troops."***

### Kansas Study

The Kansas study, published in the Nov. 15 issue,

- History
- Lifestyle
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STARS AND STRIPES Newspaper

House Fed. & State Affairs

Date 2/20/2001

Attachment No. 3

Page 9 of 11



of *The American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that veterans who said they received vaccines from the military during the war but did not deploy to the Gulf may have some of the same health problems as veterans who were deployed.

Twelve percent of veterans who did not serve in the Gulf War but reported being vaccinated during that time reported symptoms of Gulf War illness, compared to 4 percent of veterans who did not serve in the war and did not receive vaccines.

The study also found 34 percent of Gulf War veterans to be affected by a pattern of symptoms linked to their wartime service, with the rate of illness differing according to where and when they served.

#### **Desert Shield**

The veterans reporting the fewest symptoms include those who served in Desert Shield but left the region before the air and ground combat began. Veterans who served on ships also had lower rates of illness. The highest rates--averaging 42 percent--were reported by those who were in Iraq or Kuwait.

According to Dr. Lea Steele, the epidemiologist who directed the study for the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, "Differences in illness rates indicate that Gulf War-related health problems are not just randomly reported by all veterans, but are connected to different locations and experiences in the war."

Eddington vowed to seek congressional action to shift Gulf War illness research funds away from studies concerning stress to studies of toxic exposures reported by veterans during and after the war. "Private sector and non-federal researchers have consistently found evidence of real illnesses among these veterans," Eddington said.

"It's past time for the federal government to shift its research dollars away from the hidebound Pentagon/VA medical community and into channels that have gotten results."

#### **▶ FORWARD THIS TO A FRIEND**

Please post your comments below or email David Eberhart at [deberhart@stripes.com](mailto:deberhart@stripes.com).

House Fed. &  
State Affairs  
Date 2/20/2001  
Attachment No. 3  
Page 10 of 11



## THE KANSAS PERSIAN GULF WAR VETERANS HEALTH INITIATIVE

*A Project of the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs*

700 S.W. Jackson, Suite 701  
Topeka, KS 66603-3758  
email: kspgwvets@cjnetworks.com

Telephone (785) 296-3976  
Fax (785) 296-1462  
Information Network: 1-888-474-9838

The Kansas Persian Gulf War Veterans Health Initiative is a unique state-sponsored research and service program serving Persian Gulf War veterans in Kansas.

### Research Program

- Investigates the unexplained health problems reported by Kansas Gulf War veterans
- Epidemiologic study of Kansas Gulf War veterans completed
- Studies of neurologic and genetic aspects of Gulf War-related conditions now underway

### Information Services

- Comprehensive information resource on health issues, medical research, available programs and benefits, government regulations, and legislation related to Gulf War veterans
- Information provided to Kansas Gulf War veterans and family members through toll-free information line, mailings, and upcoming statewide meetings

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For more information, contact Dr. Lea Steele at the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs  
700 S.W. Jackson, Suite 701, Topeka, KS 66603  
Tel: (785) 296-7455, email: kspgwvets@cjnetworks.com

House Fed. &  
State Affairs

Date 2/20/2001

Attachment No. 3

Page 11 of 11